

## ***This Week in Congress***

*March 1, 2010*

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." Starting next week, I will be sending "This Week in Congress" from a new email program. If you do not receive the next newsletter, please [contact me](#).

### **Introducing Legislation to Expand Exports to Cuba**

I introduced legislation this week with Collin Peterson, Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, to expand agricultural trade with Cuba. Current U.S. trade policies hurt American farmers and ranchers by making it more expensive for Cuba to purchase agriculture products from the United States. As a result, Cuba is buying its food from other countries less friendly to the U.S. By standardizing our trade policies, we will increase export sales and support thousands of American jobs.

Specifically, H.R. 4645, the Travel Restriction Reform and Export Enhancement Act, allows for cash payments to be made when a Cuban buyer receives the commodities, rather than when the U.S. ships them. It also eliminates a trade barrier by allowing direct cash payments from a Cuban buyer to a U.S. financial institution. Current rules force payments through foreign banks before the funds can be transferred to U.S. banks – which only increases the price of American agricultural products. H.R. 4645 will also allow U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba. This will eliminate bureaucratic red tape and allow American farmers and ranchers to market and sell their goods more competitively to Cuba. [Click here](#) to read more about this legislation.

This legislation is supported by many agriculture and business groups. [Click here](#) to read a letter of support from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

[Click here](#)

to read a letter of support from representatives of agriculture producers, processors, exporters, and related industries from across the nation.

## **Discussing Health Care Reform**

On Thursday, President Obama and Members of Congress from both parties participated in a White House summit to discuss health care reform. At the conclusion of the seven-hour meeting, the President made clear that he intends to move forward on health care reform, with or without bipartisan support.

I continue to support common sense ideas to preserve health care quality and lower costs – such as medical liability reform, allowing insurers to sell policies across state lines, creating state high-risk pools to address pre-existing conditions and provide uninsured Americans access to health insurance, encouraging employer-sponsored health and wellness programs, letting individuals purchase health insurance with pre-tax dollars, and allowing small businesses to pool together to purchase health insurance.

Before the White House summit, I spoke to the House of Representatives on Wednesday about the importance of including medical malpractice reform as part of any health care reform package. Ignoring medical malpractice reform is irresponsible because lawsuit abuse directly leads to inflated insurance premiums and the practice of “defensive medicine,” which costs more than \$650 billion each year, or 26 percent of our annual health care spending. [Click here](#) to watch my speech.  
[Click here](#) to read more about my ideas on health care reform.

## **Pentagon Moves Forward with Refueling Tanker Competition**

The Department of Defense released its final request for aerial refueling tanker proposals on Wednesday. Similar to previous attempts to replace the aging tanker fleet, bids are now expected from Boeing and a consortium of Northrop Grumman and Airbus parent EADS.

This third attempt to compete for the tanker contract will be an improvement over previous rounds. While changes will make the competition more fair and less subjective, the Air Force continues to refuse to level the playing field for American companies, despite insistence from the Kansas delegation. Modernizing the Eisenhower-era tanker fleet is vital for the safety of our military personnel and the security of our country, and I hope this process can now move forward to completion. [Click here](#) to read more.

## Supporting Kansas Hospitals

This week, I worked on health care issues that are extremely important to Kansas hospitals, doctors and nurses.

**Supporting Rural Hospitals:** As Co-Chairmen of the Rural Health Care Coalition, Congressman Earl Pomeroy (North Dakota) and I authored a bipartisan letter, signed by 70 Members of the House of Representatives, requesting that House leadership extend important Medicare payments. These payments expired last year, and are important to rural health care

providers. To preserve medical access for Kansans, hospitals and health care providers must receive appropriate reimbursements for the care they provide. Inadequate reimbursements discourage providers from seeing Medicare patients and may force them out of business. This jeopardizes patients' access to health care in Kansas, where our providers care for an increasingly aging population across a wide geographic area.

**Protecting Patient Therapy Services:** I also joined the Kansas congressional delegation in a letter to U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, expressing concern over federal regulations regarding physician supervision of outpatient therapeutic services. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has required direct physician supervision for outpatient therapeutic services at hospitals, including drug and blood infusions, psychiatric services and pulmonary rehabilitation services. This policy places a considerable burden on Kansas hospitals that routinely face shortages of physicians. I requested CMS give Kansas hospitals and other rural health facilities across the country the flexibility they need in caring for their patients.

## **Recognizing K-State Students and the Proud Campaign**

This week, I spoke to the House of Representatives about recognizing the K-State Proud campaign. Founded in the fall of 2006 by students, K-State Proud raises money through donations to fund scholarships in the Student Opportunity Awards program. These scholarships are awarded to students who are facing financial hardship and may have to leave school. For a \$10 donation, each donor received a K-State Proud t-shirt to be worn on Saturday at the men's basketball game. I am proud to recognize a student-founded, student-run program focused on helping fellow students. Congratulations to K-State Proud's co-chairs Anna Zeiger, Reed Pankratz and Robert Swift. [Click here](#) to watch my speech.

I also had the opportunity to address the K-State Proud rally prior to the KSU men's basketball game against Missouri. I appreciated the opportunity to recognize KSU fans and cheer the Wildcats to victory.

### **Celebrating the Boy Scouts of America's 100th Anniversary**

For the past century, the Boy Scouts of America has enriched the lives of millions of boys and young men by training them to be better citizens, developing their personal fitness and building their character. On Friday, I was pleased to deliver the keynote address at the Friends of Scouting Breakfast in Salina. As a former Scout and adult Scouter, I am honored to serve as the Honorary Chair for this year's historic celebration.

I spoke to volunteers, parents and supporters about the importance of the Boy Scouts in the lives of Kansas youth. Scouting programs teach young men to be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind and obedient. These values are just as important today as they were in 1910. The Boy Scouts also equips our youth with a variety of new skills that stay with them long into their adult years.

I am proud to support such an outstanding organization that helps preserve America's traditions and prepares our youth for the challenges of tomorrow. Thanks to the many volunteers who lead programs for Scouts each week – your work is a valuable investment in the lives of Kansas youth. Thanks to Scott Bergkamp for his leadership as District Chairman, and to Frank Hampton, Stacy Huff, Mike Payne and Dennis Lull for their dedication to the Boy Scouts. [Click here](#) to view photos from my visit.

### **Speaking at the Kansas Music Educators Association (KMEA) Annual Convention**

On Friday, I had the opportunity to attend the KMEA's Annual Convention in Wichita. Each year, speakers, performers and vendors come together in Wichita to learn from one another and discuss best practices in music education. At the convention, I spoke with members of the Kansas Choral Directors Association, as well as members of CMENC – the collegiate chapter of

the National Association for Music Education. Music education is an important part of every student's education, and I was glad to meet so many talented educators who enrich the lives of students across Kansas. Thanks to Hays High School Band Director and KMEA President-Elect Craig Manteuffel for joining me at the convention.

### **Cattle Show Benefits Kansas Charity**

I attended the 2010 KSU AGR/B&B Kickoff Show at the Kansas State Fairgrounds in Hutchinson on Saturday. Showmen and women from across the Midwest brought their cattle to this annual cattle show sponsored by Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity at Kansas State University. Proceeds from the show will benefit a local Kansas charity. During the event, I visited with those in attendance about the work of the House Agriculture Committee and the importance of the beef industry. In Kansas alone, the beef industry accounts for more than \$6 billion in annual revenue. Thanks to Alpha Gamma Rho members for organizing this event and for hosting me.

### **Raising Awareness and Support for Haiti**

I attended a "Hope for Haiti" event at Washburn University in Topeka on Monday, to raise awareness and funds to send 48,000 pounds of food to the people of Haiti. "Hope for Haiti" was the final event during Can Emporia drive, a month-long canned food drive competition between Washburn and Emporia State University. Congratulations to the students at Washburn, who won the competition by collecting 15,766 cans, and to the students at ESU for their participation



in this worthy cause. During the event, I spoke with Greg Love and John Maples from Montezuma, who were in Haiti the day of the earthquake. Thanks to Greg, John and Garrett Love for organizing such an important event and for inviting me to attend.

### **Accepting 2010 Distinguished Community Health Superhero Award**

On Thursday, I met with the Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved. During our meeting, members of the Association presented me with the 2010 Distinguished Community Health Superhero Award. I was honored to receive this award and will keep working to ensure all Kansans have access to affordable quality health care.

Presenting me with the award was Susie Schwartz and David Sanford of Wichita, Bryan Brady of Hays, Connie Hubbell of Topeka, and Betty Murrell of Emporia. [Click here](#) to see a photo.

### **Mourning the Loss of Mimi Kruse**

On Monday, I attended the memorial service for Mimi Kruse in Plainville at Sacred Heart Catholic Church. I had the privilege of getting to know Mimi and his family while growing up in Plainville. Mimi was a wonderful person and dear friend, and will be greatly missed. My thoughts and prayers are with his wife Vera, their children, and their 6 grandchildren.

### **Internship Applications Due on Friday**

Kansans interested in serving as a congressional intern in my office have until Friday, March 5, 2010 to submit applications. Internships are available in my Washington, D.C., Hays, Hutchinson and Salina offices for the summer 2010 term. The summer internship opportunities teach Kansans about our government and public service and help develop writing and communication skills that are important to success. Interns are compensated for their work and may be eligible for transportation benefits. [Click here](#) for more information about internships and to learn how to apply. Questions or comments may be directed to Mark Colwell at 202-225-2715.

### **In the Office**

Mark Swope of Leavenworth was in with the American Federation of Government Employees to talk to me about correctional officer safety. Vern Osborn of Manhattan was in to share his support for maintaining and expanding historic and scenic trails across America. Ross and Shirley Marshall of Overland Park were in with the Santa Fe Trail Association to express their

support for community outreach programs to promote trails.

Julie Porter and Ashley Jones-Wisner were in with the Greater Kansas City Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to tell me about their work to improve Kansas communities. Jack Fowler of Topeka, Executive Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs, met with me to discuss state veterans' homes, benefits and services for Kansas veterans. Mike Utz of Garden City was in with the Mid-States Organized Crime Information Center to talk about programs helping law enforcement across Kansas.

A.W. Pickel of Overland Park and Craig Yaryan of Wichita were in with the Kansas Association of Mortgage Professionals to chat about financial regulations impacting the industry. Commander Colonel Regena Aye of Osage City and Cadet Mitch Edwards of Salina were in to represent the Kansas Wing of the Civil Air Patrol and to talk about defense funding issues and recognizing World War II pilots.

Tom Buis and Steve McNinch of Oakley were in with Growth Energy and Western Plains Energy, LLC to update me on the renewable fuels industry. Members of Kansas Municipal Utilities were in to bring me up to date on a number of issues that affect Kansas municipalities, including burdensome new environmental regulations. In with the group were Lance Boyd of Gardner, Joe Dick and Don Gray of Kansas City, Greg DuMars of Lindsborg, Colin Hansen and Tim Maier of McPherson, E. David Howard of Pratt, Merl Page of Wamego, Colin Whitley of Wichita and Joel Wahaiken of Garden City.

Steve Jack, Scott Miller and Lisa Weakley of Leavenworth; Chris Donnelly, Kathy Bard and Paula Crook of Tonganoxie; and Nolan Sunderman and Ken Miller of Lansing were in with Leavenworth County to talk to me about important infrastructure projects within the county. The Kansas Credit Union Association was in to speak with me about legislation to remove the business lending cap on credit unions and a proposed bill to regulate overdraft fees. In with the group were Jim Holt, Mike Welli, John and Helen Sherwood, Marla and Jerry Marsh, Larry Damm, Marilyn and Randy Wells, Kenneth Greteman and Diane and John Davis of Wichita; John Smith and Haley DaVee of Topeka; and Robert and Sue Reeves of Manhattan.

David Arganbright of Phillipsburg; Tom Tunnell, Joshy Madathil, Gregg Shaffer and Michele Brady of Topeka; and Rob Matthews of Olathe were in to talk about the current status of the railroad industry and the importance of legislation that would help create jobs by promoting the repairing and expansion of rail infrastructure. Don Boggs and Sue Peterson of Manhattan and Steve Irsik of Ingalls were in with the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities to discuss research and extension at land grant universities.

Brady Deville of Wakefield, Dale Hayse of Greensburg, Terry Wickham of Manhattan and Ron Wood were in with the National Groundwater Association to tell me about the energy saving benefits of heat pumps. Randy Whisenhurt of Hillsboro, Gary Gantz of Ness City and Dough Wright of Moundridge were in with the Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Association and Kansas Grain and Feed Association to inform me about many issues affecting the grain, feed and agribusiness sector in Kansas. John Haas of Larned and Mike Stamm and Gary Pierzynski of Manhattan were in with the U.S. Canola Association to discuss canola research projects.

Terry Calaway and Joe Sopcich of Overland Park and Dick Carter of Topeka were in with Johnson County Community College (JCCC) to update me on recent developments at JCCC. Jean and Darrell Bryant of Cimarron; Valerie McGhee, Shawn Sullivan and Matthew Bogner of Wichita; and Joe Ewart of Topeka were in with the Kansas Association of Homes and Services

for the Aging to discuss the importance of not-for-profit long-term health care provider organizations. Christopher Roe of Great Bend and Kendall Jones of Lenexa were in with Cuna Mutual to give me some background on their company and discuss crop insurance policy.

Ann and Michael Byington of Topeka were in with the Kansas Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired to discuss efforts to improve the quality of life, equality of opportunity and independence of all people who have visual impairments. Mark Padfield of Tonganoxie was in with the Kansas Athletic Trainers Society to talk about the quality health care provided by athletic trainers. Lisa Hart of Emporia was in with the Tuberous Sclerosis Alliance of Greater Kansas City to advocate for Tuberous Sclerosis Complex (TSC) research.

Lou Ann Kibbee of Hays and Shannon Jones of Topeka were in with SKIL of Western Kansas and the Statewide Independent Living Council of Kansas to speak about equality and full inclusion for Kansans with disabilities. Randall O'Donnell of Leawood, Genny Nicholas of Kansas City and Dallas Polen of Overland Park were in with Children's Mercy Hospital to express support for health care access for Kansas children. David Sanford of Wichita was in with GraceMed Health Clinic to discuss initiatives to provide medical and dental care for uninsured and underinsured Kansans.

Pittsburg State University President Steve Scott, Andrew Myers and Steve Robb of Pittsburg were in to update me on the latest developments at Pitt State. John Harrington of Manhattan and Pat and Paul Phillips of Hays were in with the Kansas Geographic Alliance to discuss the benefits of geography education for Kansas students. Members of the Kansas Chiropractic Association were in to support disease prevention and wellness initiatives. In with the group were Travis Oller of Topeka, Edward McKenzie of Holton, Mark Wade and Alicia Myers-Mock of Kansas City, Abigail Robinson of Great Bend, Jeremy Kobler of Dodge City and Ryan Jones of Chanute. Dave McDonald, Andy Schlepp and John Tomblu of Topeka were in with Wichita State University to visit.

Several Kansans came by my Washington, D.C. office this week to receive a tour of the United States Capitol: Robin, Gretchen and Joseph Stroud of Dodge City; Terry Towner and John Townes of Pittsburg; Kent, Ashley and Emma Cornish of Lawrence; Dorothy Barnett of Hutchinson; Greg and Kelly DuMars of Lindsborg and Mike and Marie Greene of Wichita.

## Contact Me

It is an honor to serve you in Washington, D.C. Please let me know how I can be of assistance. To send me an email, [click here](#) . You can also [click here](#) to contact me through one of my Kansas offices or my Washington, D.C., office.

Very truly yours,

Jerry